

SAFETY ALERT



AFZF-GA-SAFE

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD
FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056



29 May 2002

MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION

SUBJECT: Aircraft Accident Prevention -- Safety Alert 02-06

1. Recently, an OH-58D crashed while the crew performed unsafe maneuvers for existing flight conditions during a low-level flight on the final day of a three-week exercise. A major factor was the apparent overconfidence of an experienced instructor pilot (IP) who was at the controls. Because the density altitude was over 9000 feet, Out-of-Ground-Effect power was not available – causing harsh conditions for heavily laden aircraft. While executing an uncoordinated maneuver, the IP failed to maintain situational awareness when he turned in excess of restrictions in the –10 manual, and allowed his airspeed to degrade to less than necessary to maintain flight. As a result, the aircraft side slipped, began a rate of descent in excess from which the IP could recover, and the aircraft impacted the ground and was destroyed.
2. Present and Contributing Factors: While collecting mission planning data, the unit commander requested his weather brief from an Air Force base, rather than from a nearby Army airfield. The data that the Air Force base provided did not include the needed forecast maximum conditions. Because the crew did not have available maximum conditions for the day, they used conditions that were two days old for performance planning. The actual conditions were 5 degrees Celsius warmer and wind was 5 knots greater than the old data reflected. Because of this difference, the IP was unaware of the correct limitations of the aircraft for the conditions present in the training area.
3. As this incident shows, even senior/experienced pilots can have accidents when the right circumstances line up. In this case, the IP's overconfidence, exacerbated by incomplete flight performance data, caused the loss of a multi-million dollar aircraft. I want commanders to brief all aviators on the lessons learned outlined above, in particular, the requirements for proper mission planning - by the book. Standards were in place; but, through complacency and unnecessary risk taking, they were not followed. This accident was preventable!

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